

# Kentucky Teacher

December 2008 - January 2009

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

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## Meet the 2009 Kentucky Teacher of the Year

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# Kentucky Teacher

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

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**Front cover:** 2009 *Kentucky Teacher* of the Year Karen Gill instructs students during her AP Physics class at Henry Clay High School (Fayette County). Photo by Amy Wallot

## ON YOUR MIND

Your Feedback from the *Kentucky Teacher* Inbox

*Kentucky Teacher* wants to know what you think about the articles it publishes. Send e-mails to [kyteacher@education.ky.gov](mailto:kyteacher@education.ky.gov) or mail to *Kentucky Teacher*, 612 Capital Plaza Tower, Frankfort, KY 40601. Include your name, school or organization (if applicable), address and telephone number or e-mail address. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

I was greatly disappointed by the misinformation in the recent Social Security article in *Kentucky Teacher* ("Two Social Security provisions cut teachers' retirement money," October 2008). No teacher in the state of Kentucky wants to get rid of our state retirement system; what we, and the other 14 states of teachers, fire fighters, police officers, etc. who are affected by WEP/GPO, want is to be eligible for our full retirement and/or survivor benefits. Talk to Elise Mohon at Campbellsville Middle School whose husband died recently. She went to the Social Security office to apply for her survivor's benefit and when the gentleman who was helping her discovered she was a public servant, Elise was told that she would get a fraction of the money that was owed to her husband and his descendants. So if Elise had spent her life serving herself rather than the children of this commonwealth, she would be sent a check each month from our government that is decidedly larger than what she gets now.

But Elise isn't the only educator in our state affected by WEP/GPO. My husband and I were both employed by the private sector before becoming teachers. Despite having put in enough quarters to be eligible for Social Security benefits, neither of us will receive our full benefit because we decided to serve the children of our state.

I would suggest that next time you do an article on this issue, you talk to the people who understand what the issue is through personal experience.

**Rachel Dwyer Mantooth, teacher**  
Montgomery County Schools

As president of the Kentucky Education Association, I, too, was disappointed by the article in *Kentucky Teacher* ("Two Social Security provisions cut teachers' retirement money," October 2008). NEA and KEA have advocated for years that if Kentucky teachers were paying into Social Security because of their work in second, third and fourth jobs that when they became eligible to receive their Social Security they should be entitled to it. And it is because of NEA's efforts and continued lobbying that there were both House and Senate hearings on the repealing of these two penalties in the

last session of Congress.

No Kentucky teacher that I know of has ever advocated for KTRS to be replaced by Social Security in the Commonwealth. ... The whole issue around Social Security arises because teacher widows are not allowed to draw their husband's benefits because of their years as a public servant. Why should a woman be denied her husband's benefits and scrimp and save for the remainder of her life all because she chose to teach in Kentucky? And how will we ever attract and retain the best teachers to come to Kentucky to teach if when making that career change in their thirties and forties they realize what the penalties will do to their retirement?

I hear from teachers daily just as Mr. Wagoner does. They are outraged that they won't have a second retirement account to rely on when they retire. Mr. Whelan said in the article that Social Security was never meant to be the sole means of retirement, but KTRS shouldn't be either. If someone pays into and becomes vested in two accounts, they should be able to draw their FULL benefit from those two accounts.

As a retired teacher of 38 years, my mother, Lucy Oxendine, retired in 1982 before the penalties began. When my father, also a teacher, died in 1994, my mother began receiving his survivor benefits from Social Security. With an ending teaching salary of \$16,000 you can imagine what her KTRS annuity is today. As my mother approaches her 89th birthday, the

Social Security she receives from my father's work pays for her day care and allows her to stay comfortably at home. I ask, what will pay for my day care? I, too, am penalized and won't be eligible for my entire Social Security benefit.

I hope that Mr. Whelan's comments about the 70,000 teachers lighting torches and packing pitchforks and marching on Washington was a direct reference to KEA and our ability to act collectively to get things done. Whether it is or not, that's exactly what I'd like to do. And rest assured we're working on doing just that!

**Sharron Oxendine, president**  
Kentucky Education Association

I just finished reading your article, "Two Social Security provisions cut teachers' retirement money" (October 2008) and I was very happy that it was finally spelled out for me. I am one of the teachers Mr. Wagoner referred to that was recruited to teach from another field of specialization. Thank you for the very informative article. I had just sat down with my financial adviser and he showed me the difference of the two – it is overwhelming the benefit difference in the long run. Have a wonderful day.

**Wendy Robertson, teacher**  
Jefferson County Schools

## Talk to the Experts ...

### About Certification

Education Professional  
Standards Board  
100 Airport Road, 3rd Floor  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
Phone: (502) 564-4606  
Fax: (502) 564-7080  
Toll Free: (888) 598-7667  
[www.kyepsb.net](http://www.kyepsb.net)

### About Retirement

Kentucky Teachers'  
Retirement System  
479 Versailles Road  
Frankfort, KY 40601-3868  
Phone: (502) 848-8500  
Fax: (502) 573-0199  
Toll Free: (800) 618-1687  
<http://ktrs.ky.gov>



Photo by Amy Wallot

## Studying student data

Corie Edens, arts and humanities teacher at Carroll County Middle, left, and Carroll County English Language Learning (ELL) coordinator Betty Stark examine proficiency levels of ELL during the ELL Data Retreat. The retreat, facilitated by World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) and the Kentucky Department of Education, is a professional development opportunity for school districts to learn how to effectively collect and use data in order to improve the academic achievement of ELL students.



## COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

By Jon E. Draud, Commissioner of Education

# Kentucky schools strive for literacy

Literacy is key in students getting to proficiency, as well as being successful in life. With support from the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) has been engaging key audiences in developing an adolescent literacy plan for the state. In addition, KDE has been developing a state work plan for adolescent literacy to address objectives, strategies/activities, timelines and person(s) responsible for carrying out the objectives.



Draud

Task force members worked in groups organized by the recommendation areas of teacher certification/preparation, professional development, instructional resources, data-informed decision making, support structure and communication plan. The groups reviewed objectives and strategies and made recommendations for additional ones, clarified language in areas and discussed strategies for accomplishing the objectives.

During the October Kentucky Board of Education meeting, the task force presented its recommendations for review. Some of the key suggestions from the task force include:

- Include incentives to increase reading specialists and reading coaches serving at the secondary level.
- Provide access to resources in adolescent literacy at the secondary level.
- Provide students with access to support systems, such as mentors, to encourage literacy skills.
- Support/assist schools and districts in using data to develop and implement literacy plans.
- Provide formative and diagnostic assessment training and support resources, including determining students' reading levels in content areas, to inform instruction.
- Include the literacy and learning strategies component on evaluation instruments for all teachers and administrators,

including the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program and Kentucky Principal Internship Program.

- Share plan information with specific audiences who have the means to take action (i.e., teacher-preparation programs in literacy).

## Early childhood literacy

Literacy proficiency is a goal that can begin for Kentucky students very early in life. I was in northern Kentucky in September and heard about a wonderful program that gets preschoolers involved in helping younger children learn about literacy. "Let Literacy Lead your Life," led by Jenny Staten of Kelly Elementary (Boone County), invites students to collect books for newborn infants. The books, along with a pamphlet promoting the importance of early literacy, will then be distributed to local hospitals to newborn babies.

Projects such as this one in Boone County demonstrate a unique approach to education that works by bringing together educators, students and parents to raise proficiency levels and allowing all stakeholders to share in the state's literacy success.

The Kentucky Department of Education is committed to all children reaching proficiency in reading and mathematics and to all children performing at high levels through high-quality teaching and administration and a strong and supportive environment.

## Assessment, funding top legislative priorities

The 2009 General Assembly convenes in January for a 30-day session, during which legislators will review initiatives affecting all Kentuckians, including educators, students and school districts. The proposals the Kentucky Board of Education will submit to the legislature will be directly connected to the state's goal of reaching proficiency by 2014.

Items on the legislative agenda include:

## Dropout-prevention grants

- Remove priority in the awarding of dropout-prevention grants to districts with chronically high dropout rates, remove the requirement to direct 75 percent of available funds to elemen-



Photo by Tim Thornberry

## Students unite to read

Cheryl Million, media specialist/librarian at Mason Corinth Elementary (Grant County), reads "Gregory, the Terrible Eater" to 2nd-grade students attending the Unite to Read program held recently at Grant County High School. Student organization members and teachers provided an array of activities connected to the book for the children during the event, which was called "Hay Read." Unite to Read is a statewide project designed by Kentucky's Career and Technical Student Organizations to promote literacy and lifelong learning.

tary and middle school students and 25 percent to high school students, and focus the grant program on supporting promising and proven practices that are systemic, scalable, replicable and aligned with the principles of secondary reform.

Dropout prevention must move forward in the context of persistence to graduation for all students and be more closely tied to the overall middle and high school reform agenda. KRS 158.146(4) requires that priority for grants be given to districts that average, over a three-year period, a dropout rate of five percent or more. When the statute was enacted, that criterion captured a large number of districts. Today, because of the progress that has been made, the number of eligible districts is much smaller. Because these districts must receive priority, some districts that would not otherwise be recommended for funding receive grants repeatedly.

## Preschool learning

- Expand pre-K learning opportunities.

There is a growing body of research showing that focusing educational efforts on the early years yields economic and societal benefits that can rival more traditional economic development projects. Long-term

studies reveal that adults who participated in high-quality early education programs as children, compared with those who did not, have higher lifetime earnings, higher rates of home ownership, lower arrest rates and less need for social services. The Kentucky Board of Education encourages the General Assembly to build on the traditions established in the 1990 Reform Act and later early childhood innovations to assure that all of Kentucky's youngest residents have access to high-quality preschool opportunities in their communities.

You can follow the progress of education bills during the 2009 session of the Kentucky General Assembly on the Legislative Research Commission's Web site at [www.lrc.ky.gov](http://www.lrc.ky.gov). The site provides links to contact information for legislators by phone (toll free) and e-mail in the "Quick Links" box on the right side of the page.

There is a lot of work ahead to accomplish our goals for public education in Kentucky. Along with the Kentucky Board of Education, I look forward to leading the department and school districts as we work to meet these goals.

(To contact Commissioner Draud on this topic, e-mail him at [jon.draud@education.ky.gov](mailto:jon.draud@education.ky.gov).)



# Board endorses governor's plan to raise tobacco tax

By Matthew Tugate

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The Kentucky Board of Education formally endorsed Gov. Steve Beshear's proposal to increase the cigarette tax by 70 cents and to double the tax on other tobacco products during the board's meeting in December.

Education officials also thanked the governor for sparing the funding formula for Kentucky schools and requiring "only" a two percent budget cut when most other areas of state government had to cut twice that much as part of Beshear's plan to address the state's \$456.1 million budget shortfall in the current fiscal year.

"I want to publicly thank the governor for his support of education in this state," board Chairman Joe Brothers said. "This is much better than what we had been expecting."

The two percent cut amounts to about \$8 million, according to Greg Rush, associate commissioner of the Office of Internal Administration and Support. But that beats the four percent reduction Beshear asked all departments to consider. A reduction that included the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky (SEEK) funding formula would have cost Kentucky schools and the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) approximately \$132 million.

"It's much, much better than we actually could have imagined," Rush said. "We've still got some work to do. I mean, \$8 million is not insignificant."

He said KDE staff will review whether the \$8 million in cuts will be across the board or from specific programs.

"We're going to turn over every stone looking for money to minimize the impact on districts," Rush said.

Beshear's plan, which also will furlough state employees for three days, requires legislative approval. Beshear pushed for the 70-cent tax increase late in the General Assembly's session in the spring, but only a 25-cent increase passed in the House, and nothing passed in the Senate. Without any tax increases, Beshear said he will have to impose six percent cuts to all agencies, including schools.

"To gut education is to doom Kentucky to

mediocrity for as long as we can imagine. Education is my top priority and I believe it must be our state's top priority," Beshear said. "We cannot sacrifice our future."

Prior to Beshear's announcement, Commissioner Jon E. Draud had polled superintendents across the state and found that a four percent reduction would "severely limit every district's ability to provide high-quality learning experiences for students."

Board member Steve Neal said he wanted the board to go on record supporting Beshear's proposal so the department would not have to implement the drastic cuts that would be needed should the legislature not increase the tobacco taxes.

"I shake at the thought of going back to the original proposal and the impact that is going to have on children," he said.

Board members decided to lend their collective voice not only for the economic benefit (the cigarette tax increase is projected to raise \$81.5 million through the end of this fiscal year), but also for the health benefits of reduced smoking rates.

"Cigarettes have a very bad impact on our children, and I think if we are going to tax something, this is something as a health issue we can endorse," board member Judith Gibbons said.

The only "no" vote to the endorsement came from Billy Harper, who said the state Board of Education should advocate for educational funding without telling the governor and state legislature how to provide that funding.

Neal said he could understand Harper's position, but "it's not a time for the faint of heart ... it's time to be for something."

The board also approved its 2009 legislative agenda, which includes changing the law to allow the state Board of Education to remove a superintendent or school board member for "chronic low academic performance" and to allow school-level arts and humanities assessments to replace or supplement student testing as part of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System.

Brothers said the law allows for a superintendent's removal for a variety of reasons, including fiscal mismanagement, but not



Photo by Amy Wallot

Al Rider, president and CEO of the North Central Educational Foundation in Elizabethtown, is the recipient of the ninth annual Joseph W. Kelly Award. The award was presented by the Kentucky Board of Education at its December meeting in Frankfort. Hardin County Superintendent Nannette Johnston, left, and Rider's wife, Susan, also attended the award presentation.

explicitly for academic problems.

"Are we willing to take a stand that education is as important as the other things on that list?" he asked.

Several board members questioned whether removing a superintendent would be politically palatable and whether introducing such a bill during a 30-day session was the right timing. Board members Dorie Combs, Austin Moss and Neal voted against including it in the board's legislative package.

There wasn't any disagreement over changing the way arts and humanities are assessed, which would judge schools more on the arts opportunities they give students than on paper-and-pencil tests of student knowledge.

The change would expand a pilot project that evaluates schools' arts programs based on Kentucky's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement.

"Teaching art is about teaching about art, it's about teaching with art and it's about doing art and all of the arts," Combs said.

The board also discussed the Interstate Compact on Education Opportunity for Military Children, which eases transitions for students who must enroll in different schools as a result of their parents' military assignments. The board agreed to support extending the compact to civilian employees of military installations.

The board also heard a presentation on the master's program and principal's program redesign from Phil Rogers, executive director of the Education Professional Standards Board. The redesign is intended to improve those training programs for teachers seeking master's degrees and principals enhancing their leadership skills.

Other presentations included:

- the board's strategic plan progress report
  - the Credit Abuse Resistance Education program
  - a progress report on the Kentucky Instructional Data System
  - the annual report of the Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children
  - an update on the Infinite Campus student/school information system implementation
- The board took the following actions:
- presented the Joseph Kelly Award to Al Rider, president and CEO of the North Central Education Foundation in Elizabethtown
  - approved district facility plans for the McCreary County and Fairview, Southgate and Williamsburg Independent school districts
  - approved district facility plan amendments for the Daviess and McCracken counties and Pineville Independent school districts
  - approved 2008-09 school district working budgets
  - approved 2008-09 district tax rates levied
  - approved a declaration of emergency for Covington Independent, related to the district's financial status; the declaration provides an avenue for state assistance and oversight
  - agreed to accept internal audit reports for the Kentucky Department of Education
- The board's next regular meeting will be Feb. 10 and 11 in Frankfort. More information about the board is available at <http://www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo/?jump=KBOE>



# Geological maps becoming popular in Kentucky classrooms

By **Jennifer Humble**, Paul Laurence Dunbar High  
**Cathey Seaton**, Ballard County Middle School  
**Dan Carey**, Kentucky Geological Survey

Hundreds of teachers across Kentucky have responded enthusiastically to the offer of free, laminated county geology maps through the Maps-to-Teachers service from the Kentucky Geological Survey (KGS) at the University of Kentucky (UK).

A *Generalized Geologic Map for Land-Use Planning* has been developed – with an accompanying brochure/PowerPoint, Maps Tell Us About Where We Live – for each of Kentucky's 120 counties. The idea is to help students.

"Maps seem to attract people of all ages—from my 3-year-old grandson to senior citizens—who want to see and learn more about the places where they live," said Program Coordinator Dan Carey. "Providing these maps to classrooms across the state seemed to be a great way to realize both the KGS and UK missions of service and dedication to applying, sharing and disseminating knowledge across Kentucky, as we work to make the state a better place to live and learn."

Jennifer Humble, a teacher at Paul Laurence Dunbar High (Fayette County), uses the Fayette County map to show her students the complexities involved in land use planning for selecting a hospital site in the county. Humble used the free *Generalized Geologic Map for Land Use Planning* with Google Earth so that students could see satellite images of Fayette County, their homes and the Geologic map at the same time.

To use the map, students located where they lived through Google Earth and discussed geological features near their homes. Finding features such as sink holes and earthquake fault lines made the Geologic Map personal to them and enhanced their interest.

The project officially began when students obtained per capita income and population density data geographical maps that also were placed into Google Earth. By combining the information from the maps, students were able to find a site to build their hospital. To share their site location, students wrote a report summarizing their findings and presented it to their peers. Humble said the project was very interesting to her students, and they gained insight regarding their county and the initial processes that can go into selecting an area to build a large structure.

Cathey Seaton, a teacher at Ballard County Middle School, was an earth science major, so she was delighted to have the chance to share that interest with her students. She divided her 6th-grade classrooms into groups accord-



Photo by Amy Wallot

At Paul Laurence Dunbar High (Fayette County), juniors Ailin Shen, left, Elizabeth Osbourne, middle, and Darshali Vyas, all students in Jennifer Humble's Math, Science and Technology Center's Earth Space class, use Google Earth, a map of Fayette County plus population density and area income information to decide where a new hospital should be located.

ing to the part of the county in which they lived. They used geologic quadrangle maps to reproduce those areas. Each group then got six sheets of flexible foam to make a rough physical model of the landform.

"They couldn't believe that those curved lines on the map really do show what the land really looks like," Seaton said.

The students referred to the geologic map provided by UK to determine what kinds of rock types were found in the area. "The kids loved it," she said. "They thought it was pretty neat that Ballard is a 'baby,' geologically speaking, meaning the county is composed of deposits from the two youngest geologic time periods."

Each group presented its findings to the class, showing its model and relating the geologic information researched. Since Ballard County is located along the New Madrid fault line, Seaton also gets earthquake noti-

fications from the U.S. Geological Survey in Memphis, which the class graphs according to frequency and intensity.

The lessons fulfilled part of the social studies applications standards in Kentucky's Core Content for Assessment related to using maps to interpret patterns and locations on the Earth's surface. Seaton's students now know how to read contour maps, a skill many adults haven't mastered. They also learned to recognize different soil types and have a better understanding of geologic time periods, she continued. "And they got to get up and move around, which is always a plus for middle-schoolers."

## MORE INFO...

[www.uky.edu/KGS/announce/landuse\\_teacher.htm](http://www.uky.edu/KGS/announce/landuse_teacher.htm)

Dan Carey, [carey@uky.edu](mailto:carey@uky.edu)



Photo submitted by Cathey Seaton

Naoma Curtis, a 6th-grade student at Ballard County Middle, refers to geologic and topographic quadrangle maps of her home as she prepares topographic models during teacher Cathey Seaton's class.



# Milken Award winner in perfect harmony with students, learning

By Susan Riddell

susan.riddell@education.ky.gov

Myra Morgan looks out at her kindergarten students, all sitting on the colorful carpet, most with their hands raised. She wants one of them to come up in front of the class and write a sentence.

Suddenly, she breaks into song.

"Who should I pick? Who should I choose?" she croons. "Let me make sure you're wearing your shoes." After singing several more unscripted lines, she selects Cheyenne to come up front.

The singing is nothing new to the students. They've come to expect and appreciate that as part of Morgan's routine at Gallatin County Lower Elementary. They also appreciate her devotion to them both academically and outside the classroom, her fellow teachers say.

It's that devotion that helped Morgan become a recipient of the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award.

The largest teacher-recognition program in the United States, the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards were created to reward, retain and attract the highest-quality K-12 educators to the profession. Each Milken Educator receives \$25,000 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Los Angeles to participate in the annual Milken National Education Conference in April 2009.

Morgan is the lone Kentucky honoree this year and is the state's 49th recipient of the Milken Award since Kentucky joined the program in 1993.

Morgan, who was surprised with the news at a school assembly on Dec. 9, is in her 13th year teaching at Gallatin County Lower Elementary, a K-3 school. She is the department chair and team leader for the school's kindergarten team.

She taught early primary students her first seven full years at the school before settling in with the kindergartners.

"Every year, I try to get a little bit better," Morgan said of her teaching. "This (award) isn't going to change me. It'll make what I do better. I just want to do what's in the best interest of my students. With this, I'll just

learn better ways to do what I'm doing. It's truly an honor."

Morgan's colleagues say her gift of song complements her knack for relating to her students and getting the most out of them academically.

"When you walk into Myra's classroom, you will never find her standing in front of her students," said Michelle Lawrence, a former primary teacher at the elementary school who now teaches at Gallatin County Middle. "You will find her sitting on the floor reading to them, at a student desk working on an activity, holding a child on her lap to listen to them read or share a story, or singing the ABCs, 'We Are Family' or the latest Jonas Brothers song."

Often, Morgan will tweak songs on the spot to incorporate content, infusing them with excitement to make a strong connection with her students.

"(She) has an incredible gift of song and poetry," said Michelle Reed, the district's school psychologist and a mother of three children who have been students of Morgan. "She utilizes this passion each day as she creates an environment rich with rhythm and rhyme that fascinates the children. It is amazing to watch her teach and more amazing to watch the bright eyes of the children as they listen in awe of her. She is animated and often dramatic in order to maintain the attention of her students."

Morgan said she has been singing since she was a little girl.

"I find that when you use song in the classroom, it lifts the stress and worry from the kids," Morgan said. "They relate to song. It's a joy to me to sing, and the students really seem to enjoy it."

"Sometimes I don't know that I'm doing it," she added. "It's just natural. It's not always planned. Sometimes appropriate words just pop into my head. I wish I could say that I plan the songs and think them out, but I can't."

Principal Joe Wright said the secret to Morgan's success as a teacher is total commitment to the child's learning.

"She removes barriers, brings parents



Photo by Amy Wallot

Kindergarten teacher Myra Morgan, right, hugs fellow kindergarten teacher Tonia Erwin after receiving the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award at Gallatin County Lower Elementary. All Milken Educators receive an unrestricted financial award of \$25,000.

on board to meet the child's needs, expects top work from each child, focuses on getting mastery of essential skills and does this while singing, laughing and playing with the students," Wright said. "She leads the children to high levels of learning while fun and success are part of everything happening in her room."

While Morgan creates the colorful, fun-filled environment for her students, anything other than high learning in her classroom is unacceptable.

"Myra exhibits high expectations for all students," said Pam Scudder, Gallatin County Lower Elementary reading coach. "No one in her class is exempt from learning. She takes each child where they are and pokes and prods them until they are successful. They are encouraged to take on tasks independently, and she will assist them until they arrive at the answer without just telling it to them. Myra takes time—lots of it—to make sure every child feels worthy and understands what is expected."

"Her desire to meet every child's individual needs may be her greatest quality," added Reed. "No matter what the ability level of the child, the socioeconomic status or the perceived expectations that others have of the child, she believes in every single child and refuses to give anything less than 110 percent to ensure their success. She impresses upon her students that she expects great

things and does not tolerate anything less because she believes in them."

Morgan said that when working with younger students, it is critical for their development to have a hands-on teacher who can give them individual attention when needed.

"I'm very hands-on," she said. "I can't say innovative, but I look for ways to let children show what they know and what they are comfortable with. I like to relate one-on-one with the kids. I can't say that I have a certain style other than to make them feel joy to be in my room."

"A good teacher is one who tries to relate to his or her students, tries to put their best interests first, tries to make sure at the end of the day each child learned a little bit more than they came in knowing. That's what I try to do each day."

Morgan will finish her Rank I this summer.

"I love, love, love teaching but I aspire to do more, whether that's in administration, as an instructional coach or working in curriculum, I don't know," she said. "The main thing is that I'm doing what I love, and that's helping children learn."

## MORE INFO...

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# 'It really did start with the physics' for Teacher of the Year

By Matthew Tungate

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Karen Gill knew physics was difficult in high school, and that is why she enjoyed it so much – the sense of accomplishment. That's also when she discovered she liked helping others learn.

"Probably if you ask my high school teachers, I always was the extra teacher in the class," the Henry Clay High (Fayette County) science teacher said.

Gill started as a physics major at Transylvania University, and she began her education courses as a sophomore.

"Teaching was appealing because I knew that it would let me work with other people. I knew that I didn't want to be locked up in a room somewhere and doing research. I'd rather be sharing it with other people," Gill said. "It really did start with the physics."

Thanks to her love of the subject and sharing it with students, Gill was named 2009 Kentucky Teacher of the Year.

Willow Hambrick, a language arts teacher at Royal Spring Middle (Scott County), was named 2009 Middle School Teacher of the Year, and Lisa Wathen, a teacher at Freedom Elementary (Bullitt County), was named 2009 Elementary School Teacher of the Year. (For more on Hambrick and Wathen, see below.)

The three joined 21 other teachers from across the state honored with 2009 Ashland Inc. Teacher Achievement Awards. Gill

received \$10,000 and a commemorative crystal-glass bowl. In addition, the Kentucky Department of Education will provide a sabbatical or suitable alternative for Gill, who also will represent the state in the 2009 National Teacher of the Year competition. Wathen and Hambrick received \$3,000 each and a customized, art-glass vase from Ashland Inc. The remaining 21 winners each received \$500 cash awards.

## Gill believes hands-on is 'minds-on'

Gill said physics is nice to teach because she can give students the tools that eventually they can do something with. Physics lends itself to visual and kinesthetic learning as well, she said.

"You've got to get the kids to do things, because if they're thinking about what they're doing, if they're capable of doing real things, then they're engaged," she said. "Once they're engaged, then they're learning, and they're coming up with questions they never knew they had."

Just standing and delivering doesn't make sure kids understand, Gill said. "It does involve hands-on, but a lot of it is minds-on too," she said.

That style takes more time, but a lot of teaching is planning. The more years you do



Photo by Amy Wallot

2009 Kentucky Teacher of the Year Karen Gill helps senior Caitlin Bingham with a dual-range force sensor during AP Physics at Henry Clay High (Fayette County).

it, the easier it is, the 18-year teaching veteran said.

But setting up labs and laying the foundation for future learning takes time. If teachers don't have time to do the planning, they can't set up labs and do hands-on learning.

"Once you do have it set up and you're getting the connection with the kids, then overall things are going to be easier, the kids are going to learn more, and it's worth it," she said.

As Kentucky Teacher of the Year, Gill

will press to improve the public's understanding of education and its trust and belief that it actually works.

Schools are doing a great job of giving students opportunities to learn, she said. But education does not give students a desire to work hard and do well.

"Students that come into the school system with that do very well," Gill said. "The students that are struggling in the school system seem not to have that desire to do well."

Educators have to educate parents and children that life will be better with an education for not only themselves, but also society.

"If families believe in the power of education, they will encourage their children to do their best in school, if children believe in education they will want to do their best, and if we all truly believe in the power of education then we will make education a top national priority," she said. "If education is really a top priority, it will receive the best people, the best resources and the best efforts that our country has to offer."

## MORE INFO ...

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## Power of words moves Hambrick, her teaching



Hambrick

On the first day of class, Willow Hambrick passes out a placard for students to keep on their desks for a month. On one side they print their names, and on the other side they express their personalities in metaphors. Hambrick describes herself as "Scattered tea leaves on weathered oak plank at first light," "Earth's first dawn, over a golden field of North Dakota wheat" and "A bruised baseball, hidden among sheaths of bluegrass, waiting for spring," among others.

"It is the dramatization of my passion for the sounds of words and the depth of expression possible when using words creatively that most lures my students into a deeper appreciation for both reading and writing," she said.

Hambrick, who has taught for 11 years,

I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice, which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

William Faulkner's Speech at the Nobel Prize Banquet after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature, Dec. 10, 1950

was moved to become a teacher in her junior year of high school after hearing her language arts teacher read a quote from William Faulkner describing someone who can

be an inexhaustible voice of hope to a suffering world.

"All of us have a place of imperative impulse – a place of deep longing; mine is characterized by a desire to write, a desire to be pastoral and theologically prophetic, and a desire to teach. Thankfully, teaching young people allows me to honor all three of these impulses and to put my fingerprint of hope on the future," Hambrick said.

## Wathen came to teaching late

Lisa Wathen was well on her way to being a civil engineer when she caught the love for teaching. Now in her sixth year at Freedom Elementary, where she teaches 4th-grade students, she is one of Kentucky's best.



Wathen

Wathen said she was always very good at mathematics, so she went into engineering because of the salary. But working as a teaching assistant showed her she loved teaching.

"Working with students was fun, and I

enjoyed helping people understand difficult concepts," Wathen said.

She said her teaching is influenced by the Chinese proverb "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." So she has students work in groups most of the day, and she speaks to facilitate discussions, answer questions and clarify directions rather than lecture.

"In my opinion, hands-on is the only way to teach," Wathen said. Students are engaged, and they are really enjoying the learning process."

She said she analyzes student data all year long to catch problems early in her teaching and address them.

"There is always room for growth and there are always ways to improve your practice," Wathen said. "I think what makes a teacher great is his or her willingness to be a lifelong learner – a student!"

## MORE INFO ...

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Lisa Wathen, lisa.wathen@bullitt.kyschools.us, (502) 955-9795



# Interns walk in the shoes of a superintendent

By Matthew Tungate

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Wade Stanfield strides into the suite of offices that make up the superintendent's office at the Fayette County school district's central office building. He is an imposing figure at 6 feet, 8 inches tall, dressed very natively in a three-piece suit. In schools, many of the students think he is a star athlete. Others think he is Barack Obama.

He actually is one of two interns in the Kentucky Department of Education's Minority Superintendent Internship Program. His office is the first inside the door of the Superintendent Stu Silberman's suite of offices, meaning he is the first line of contact to many who want to speak with "whoever is in charge."

"He's really just let me feel the heat a little bit," Stanfield said.

He meets every Friday with Silberman, his mentor in the internship program, to review what he did that week and what he will be doing the following week.

On this particular day, he also is meeting with Chief Operating Officer Mary Browning Wright. "This first semester I am embedded in every part of central office," Stanfield said.

Stanfield said he is especially interested in the financial aspects of running a district. "You've got to know the money and you've got to know the process," he said.

Next semester, he will be in charge of the one of the school district's five zones, managing every elementary, middle and high school in that area. He later finds out it will be the zone that includes Henry Clay, where he was an assistant principal when he was accepted into the internship program.

As part of the internship program, he has observed in six or seven other districts and realizes Fayette County, with its 36,000 students, is unusual, because most districts in Kentucky have 6,000-8,000 students.

"Outside of Jefferson and Fayette, no other district runs like this," Stanfield said.

Those are just the kind of experiences Michael Dailey, director of the Division of Educator Quality and Diversity with the Kentucky Department of Education, wants interns to have. Aside from learning from their districts and mentors, interns participate in the first-year superintendent educational modules. All first-year superintendents go through a one-year internship program, are given a mentor and must pass those educational modules.

Dailey also expects interns to model what they expect from the other staff in the district, so they have to do continuous professional growth through a book list and attend two conferences (National Alliance of Black

School Educators and American Association of School Administrators), and they belong to the Kentucky CEO Superintendents Network.

Stanfield's friend and fellow intern Donald Smith is working in the Burgin Independent district, as geographically and demographically different from Fayette County as it could be. The two worked at Mercer County High School when Stanfield was principal and Smith was a teacher and football coach. The phone rang as Stanfield was beginning to talk about Smith.

"That's him right there," Stanfield said, grinning broadly. They spoke for a few minutes, Stanfield agreeing to speak at a Rotary meeting with Smith about their participation in the internship program.

After he hangs up, Stanfield said he and Smith have become closer friends through the process and talk every day. "We have become talking buddies; we bounce ideas off each other," Stanfield said.

Silberman said Stanfield is his third intern. One, Diane Woods, is superintendent of the Campbellsville Independent school district, and Anthony Sanders is a gap coordinator for the Kentucky Department of Education.

"I think it's a great, great program," Silberman said.

Superintendency is an impact point, much like being a principal, for student achievement, Silberman said.

"So we need good people in those roles, and we also need to have a diverse pool of people so our kids can see role models in those positions," he said.

Stanfield shadows Silberman on personnel and student discipline issues. He also participates in Silberman's cabinet meetings.

"When Wade does become a superintendent, my hope is that he'll be able to walk in hitting the ground running," Silberman said. "We want him to have as much as he can possibly have before he gets in there."

Ninety percent of being a superintendent is people skills, he said.

"Wade is a phenomenal people person. ... And that's a talent. The remaining 10 percent is about skills and knowledge," Silberman said. "Wade's like a sponge and has been soaking up everything that we do."

After just the first semester, Stanfield

would be prepared to be a superintendent, Silberman said.

"I think Wade's way ahead of schedule," he said.

The two briefly discussed which schools each was going to that day, and Stanfield left for Henry Clay High School. Inside, Principal John Nocht said Stanfield built relationships with the students last year as an assistant principal, and now returns once a week to maintain those connections.

"I see the kids. I'm still with the kids," Stanfield said.

Stanfield could return to the school next year, but Nocht said he isn't sure that will happen.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed that he comes back here, but we're smart enough to know that a guy with his credentials is going to have opportunities," he said.

Stanfield said he would go back to Henry Clay when the program is over rather than taking a superintendency that wasn't a good fit for him.

"I could go back with a wealth of knowledge," he said.

As Stanfield walked through the halls, the affection between him and the adults and students was clear, as he hugged and talked to several of each. He even stopped in a classroom where four or five students wanted to compare their hand sizes to his.

After going to Henry Clay, Stanfield went



Photos by Amy Wallot

Wade Stanfield visits with students Courtney Demoss, left, and Celena Day at Henry Clay High (Fayette County).



Stanfield compares his hand's size with students at William Wells Brown Elementary (Fayette County). Students often take note of his large height, hands and shoes. Touring the schools the day after the presidential election, younger students thought he was Barack Obama.

to William Wells Brown Elementary, one of three new schools he has seen open this year.

The next stop was Bryan Station High. Stanfield's brother-in-law is associate principal there, and Stanfield said he is working on him to apply for the internship program. His wife and sister-in-law are educators as well.

"By us being out there, we're just scratching the surface in making people aware of the program," he said.

After getting back to his office, Stanfield spends the rest of the afternoon replying to correspondence, as the district has a 24-hour e-mail return policy. It may be mundane, but it's something he knows a superintendent has to do.

"I wouldn't trade it for anything," Stanfield said. "It's been the most awesome experience."

## Smith's internship a different world

Donald Smith's desk sits in a room with the district secretary inside a central office that is a converted house. It's as different from Stanfield's office as he is from Stanfield. He looks

the part of a football coach, squarely built with intense eyes.

This morning, Smith is participating in a monthly meeting between Burgin Independent Superintendent Richard Webb, Principal Marcia Collier and Special Education Director Maryanna Welch.

"In small districts like this, we wear a lot of hats," Webb said.

During the meeting, the group talks about teacher training, and Webb asks Smith for his opinion, which he readily gives. The group also discusses specific students and their family situations and how those students are progressing in school.

Smith discussed working with a teacher who has a class in which a high percentage of students are failing. He suggested ways to resolve the situation.

Webb suggests they use a coaching technique to solve the problem.

"You and I were both coaches – what do you do when kids don't get it? You go back to the basics," he said.

After the meeting breaks up, Smith dis-



Donald Smith talks with teachers Jacqueline Coleman and Jonie Douglas between classes at Burgin Independent during the Minority Superintendent Internship Program. Smith and Douglas were visiting classrooms doing observations.

cusses with Collier how to run a book club about professional learning communities (PLC) that the two will be attending later that morning.

Smith then went into his daily meeting with Webb. They discussed county tax assessments related to state education funding, bidding and bonding for construction, and working with state legislators. It's part of the mentor/intern process.

Smith has been involved in PLCs and a lot of other instructional areas, Webb said. He's also tried to turn over some individual relationship-building to his intern.

"He's doing the same things that I'm doing. There's not a whole lot different," Webb said. "He could do it all right now. I trust everything he does without question, because he makes the same decisions I would make."

Webb said he and Smith are similar in their backgrounds and values.

"We have similar ideas about leadership, and we address many situations in the same way," he said.

He knew Smith was a people person, which is what you have to be in a small district.

"I firmly believe that education is a people business, not a data business," Webb said. "Data plays a role in any business, but I firmly believe it's a people business and always will be, and if we don't deal with it that way, we lose what's really important in education."

Smith's syllabus came from Webb looking at what he had to learn on his own. He looked at what he'd want to know – practical, everyday knowledge.

Besides his time in the Burgin Independent school district, Smith will spend four weeks in Boyle County and four weeks in Danville, and he spent a week in Jessamine

County. He also visited Washington County and will ultimately spend two weeks in Fayette County.

"Wade wasn't able to do that because Fayette County is just so big," Smith said. "The benefit is that you have to learn everything in a small district, where in the big district, you kind of rely on everybody to do some things and bring it back to you."

Webb has a principal, a finance person and a secretary. Silberman has 40 or 50 people in his central office, Smith said.

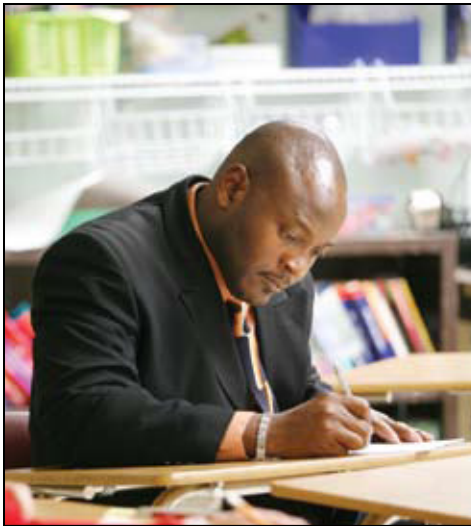
"One day we sat in here and Mr. Webb said, 'Well let's go, we've got to go do something.' And we went out and we cleaned the buses," Smith said. "And I said, 'This is not what a superintendent does.' He said, 'Well in a district like this, the superintendent has to clean the buses.'"

The Minority Superintendent Internship Program has put some high-quality administrators in position to move into superintendency, Webb said.

"There had always been minority candidates wanting to be superintendents, but this gave them an opportunity to jump right into the business," he said. "I think it is a very positive step."

After his meeting with Webb, Smith goes to the book study where a group of teachers has gathered to discuss the school's implementation of professional learning communities.

Smith raised issues out of the first chapter of the book they are reviewing. He was talking a mile a minute. At one point, he jumped in and gave an impassioned discourse on showing teachers that what they are doing isn't working. He got passionate again about accountability.



Smith takes notes during a classroom observation.

"It's either going to draw you or drive you," Smith said, sounding every bit the coach he was.

Following the meeting, he walked through the school, observing teachers.

Smith was principal at the Mercer County Day Treatment/Learning Center/9th Grade Academy for one year before he was accepted into the internship program. Smith said he was at a conference when a professor at Eastern Kentucky University told him about the Minority Superintendent Internship Program.

At first he was against applying to the program, because he believed he had his degree and shouldn't have to go through the program to get a job. But some friends suggested it might open doors that otherwise might not have been opened for him.

"It's totally different than what I thought it would be," Smith said.

He didn't realize he would go through everything that a first-year superintendent goes through.

"We're getting it even prior to getting the job," Smith said. "You can't put a price tag on that. Everything that my colleagues are having to learn on the job, I'm learning, so that when I get the job I know what to expect when I walk in."

He feels like he is ready to be a superintendent, but he wants the right fit.

"I understand my gifts and I understand what I bring, and I've got to make sure that the board and the community are going to accept me for who I am," Smith said.

## MORE INFO...

<http://www.education.ky.gov/JumpTo?jump=MSIP>

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# KentuckyShow! offers educators a unique resource for classrooms

KentuckyShow! captures the beauty and diversity of the commonwealth in a panoramic, 30-minute, high-definition multimedia show that is playing at the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts in Louisville.

Since opening in September, the show provides educators a fresh, entertaining way to teach core curriculum materials in the areas of arts and humanities, Kentucky history and culture, science and technology. Classroom resources also are available for grades 4-12 at [www.kentuckyshow.com](http://www.kentuckyshow.com).

In gorgeous, colorful brushstrokes, the show paints a dynamic portrait of Kentucky as shaped by its history, its varied geographical areas and the dynamics of its native sons and daughters. The curtain rises on Daniel Boone's Kentucky, Native American Indians and the Cumberland Gap. As the narrator explains, "word spread – a 'Garden

of Eden' lay just beyond the mountains."

The audience is swept through the ages, through the birth of settlements and towns, through the Civil War and through the establishment of major universities and industries that have put Kentucky on the international map. In addition, there is coverage of Kentucky authors and musicians weaving the history in these areas with present-day counterparts.

KentuckyShow! is a multi-sensory production. Visitors walk into a glass-walled room overlooking the Ohio River. As guests take their seats, they are greeted with the vibrant sounds of Kentucky music while the room is slowly transformed into a darkened theatre. The screen appears and dramatically expands to 36 feet wide during the show.

Due to the show's length, it provides an opportunity to couple

KentuckyShow! with other educational field trips along Main Street on the same day. Other venues of interest are the Louisville Science Center, the Muhammad Ali Center, the Frazier International History Museum, Slugger Museum, Actors Theatre or the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft.

KentuckyShow! is open to the public Tuesdays through Saturdays, and shows run on the hour from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Sundays, the show runs from noon to 5 p.m. The theatre is dark on Mondays. For school groups, admission is \$5 per person, with one paid chaperone admission per every 10 students. If coupled with a trip to STAGE ONE on the same day, the cost is \$4 per person.

## MORE INFO...

[www.kentuckyshow.com](http://www.kentuckyshow.com)  
Tim King (502) 562-7800

## Kentucky schools recognized for HealthierUS School Challenge

More than 100 Kentucky elementary schools were recognized for their achievements in the HealthierUS School Challenge (HUSC), a program designed to provide students with strong nutritional environments and high-quality, healthy and nutritious food choices.

In Kentucky, 121 elementary schools have been designated as Gold, Silver or Bronze in the HUSC, which is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Those designations indicate that the schools met the menu planning, physical activity and nutrition education criteria of HUSC. Kentucky leads the nation in the number of schools receiving the three designations.

The HealthierUS School Challenge was established in 2004 by the USDA to encourage schools to make changes to their school nutrition environments, improve the quality of the foods served and provide students with more nutritious, healthy choices. Schools that



Photo by Amy Wallot

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Edward T. Schafer visited Klondike Lane Elementary (Jefferson County) to celebrate more than 100 Kentucky elementary schools being recognized for their achievements in the HealthierUS School Challenge and to celebrate National School Lunch Week.

participate in the program can be certified as either Gold, Silver or Bronze Schools, according to standards established by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services. The objective is to recognize schools that take specific steps to improve

their programs and address obesity and to encourage other schools to follow their lead.

## MORE INFO...

[www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/healthierus/index.html)

## NEXT – Your Future After High School in Kentucky

The Lane Report is pleased to announce that the eighth annual edition of TLR's *NEXT – Your Future After High School in Kentucky* will be arriving at Kentucky's high schools in early January.

In a few short years, *NEXT* magazine has become recognized as the premier publication of its kind in Kentucky. The editorial content is designed to encourage high school students to think about their future careers and make plans to continue their education.

It is important that the magazines are distributed directly to students in the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades so that guidance counselors can effectively take advantage of this valuable resource for students as they explore the many options available to them after high school.

This year's edition includes online registration for prizes and a dedicated Web site (<http://tlrnext.com>) for future reference. Additionally, because TLR believes that this is such an important resource for students, the company is awarding an HP Compaq Desktop computer with a 17-inch LCD display monitor to the high school guidance department with the highest percentage of student registration. The school with the highest percentage of students registering via the response card or by e-mail will be the winner. In case of a tie, a drawing will determine the winning school.

Through this annual publication, *The Lane Report* is extremely proud of its commitment to the development of Kentucky's high school students. A highly skilled, educated workforce contributes significantly to both our economic vitality and quality of life.



## School districts encouraged to take advantage of e-scrap recycling

The Kentucky Finance and Administration Cabinet has awarded a contract to Creative Recycling Inc. of Tampa, Fla., to recycle more than five million pounds of electronic scrap (e-scrap) generated by government agencies and educational institutions in Kentucky each year. The large volume of scrap will be recycled in an environmentally sound manner with five percent or less of the remaining scrap going to landfills. It also ensures the proper sanitization of any data/information remaining on hard drives and in memory.

The contract allows participation by the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government and includes school districts. Agencies involved in the project are the Division of Waste Management in the Energy and Environment Cabinet (EEC); Finance's Division of Surplus Properties and Office of Procurement Services; the Department of Education's Office of Education Technology – K-12; and the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

## MORE INFO...

<http://waste.ky.gov>



# One Community, One Voice Challenge has many winners

By Susan Riddell

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Kim ran 30 minutes each day for 14 days. How many hours did she run?

To a Fayette County elementary school student, answering that question correctly could mean a full four-year scholarship to a state university.

In its third year, the district's One Community, One Voice (OCOV) Academic Challenge provides college scholarships for winners and enhances classroom learning by fostering excitement in students in regard to curriculum.

That excitement is contagious, as parents are encouraged to cheer students on and teachers are thrilled to see content taught in an extracurricular setting.

"For a lifelong teacher with 28 years' experience, this has been one of the most rewarding and worthwhile activities I have ever been involved in," said Bates Creek Elementary primary teacher Denise Finley.

One Community, One Voice is a committee working with the school system and other community partners in Fayette County to support parents who are committed to being actively involved in their children's education and their schools. OCOV was established by the Fayette County Board of Education in 2002. Its mission is to support and enhance efforts to close the achievement gap among all students.

The focal point of OCOV is the Academic Challenge, which takes place three times during the calendar year.

The first round was held Nov. 15 with upcoming dates set for Jan. 24 and March 7.

"We had more than 300 teams of students competing," said Alice Nelson, family/community liaison for Fayette County schools who also serves as a district coordinator for the Academic Challenge, of the Nov. 15 competition. "It was a great day with more than 5,000 people in attendance."

The event has grown tremendously since its inception three years ago.

"The first year I only had nine students on an intermediate team, and that was pretty much all that I could motivate to participate," Finley said. "Once the students realized the organizational set up, they were more comfortable and became more confident as the weeks of practice progressed."

A year ago, Bates Creek Elementary had almost as many teams – eight – as it had students in the first year. At the first challenge this school year, the school took 80 students on 14 teams. "To grow from nine to 80 is an amazing experience," Finley said.

The number of participants across the district increased so dramatically because students gain so much from experience.



Photo by Amy Wallot

Toni Martin, a 5th-grade student, holds up her team's answer during Academic Challenge practice at Deep Springs Elementary (Fayette County).

"Since this is an elementary competition, we feel the children need the experience of competing," Nelson said. "They learn from the experience and gain a greater understanding of how academic competition works."

Anitrea Burks teaches at Deep Springs Elementary and is one of two academic challenge coordinators there.

"Because of the Academic Challenge process, our students become more stimulated to excel in their daily academic performance," Burks said. "Our students come to academic team practice excited, with an enthusiasm to show what they have learned and an anticipation to learn more."

"Students get to apply team work, relationship building, what they have learned in the classroom, skill enhancement and an overall sense of pride to represent themselves and their school at the challenges," Burks added.

Teachers, parents and the community also benefit from the experience.

"This program allows us to spend more time with our students, providing an opportunity to develop stronger connections with

## Academic Challenge format

- There are three dates involved in the One Community, One Voice Academic Challenge. The first challenge was held Nov. 15. The next challenge, known as the Principal's Cup, is set for Jan. 24. The final challenge, called the Superintendent's Cup, will be March 7.
- Students compete in either the primary (grades 1-3) or intermediate divisions (grades 4-5).
- Teams are divided into groups of four to six students each.
- During the competitions, three teams square off against each other.
- A moderator reads a question. Teams have 45 seconds to deliberate and write their answer on a white board.
- Each round features 20 questions.
- Each correct answer is worth one point. The team with the most points after 20 questions wins and advances to the next round and so on.
- In the event of a tie, a tiebreaker question is asked.

the students and their families," Burks said of the teacher benefits.

"This program enlightens parent's knowledge in terms of academic expectations," Burks added. "They are fascinated by the questions and the responses given by the students, furthering their participation in their child's education. The academic challenge gives our community the chance to come together and show support to our students regarding their education."

Finley said teachers not directly involved in coaching the students play an important role in the challenge as well.

"Many of our teachers support us by sending us potential practice questions from their daily review flashback questions and their various assessments," Finley said. "Our teachers and staff give our Academic Challenge students encouragement prior to us participating in a district challenge and praise when we return."

All challenge questions come from Kentucky's Core Content and include all the content areas, Nelson said. Also, all students are encouraged to participate.

"The One Community, One Voice Academic Challenge is geared toward all children," Nelson said. "We have stringent guidelines about this. Any child who wants to participate may sign up to join a team at school. The coordinators at each school then form each team working to reflect the demographics of their school, balancing each team in terms of gender, race, special needs, strengths, weaknesses and more. The whole

purpose of this competition is to help students know, at a young age, that academics are important and that their parents, friends, relatives and the community as a whole will cheer them on for their academic efforts."

Scholarships are awarded at the last competition of the year. The winning Primary and Intermediate teams receive scholarships.

"We have also had content-specific competitions as part of the Superintendent's Cup," Nelson said. "Fourth- and 5th-graders can compete in an on demand writing essay contest, and the top six to 10 scorers receive scholarships, depending on the number of donated scholarships. Last year we also had an on demand mathematics and science competition for 5th-graders. The top six scorers received scholarships."

"The scholarships are full academic, most of them four-year," Nelson added. "Bluegrass Community and Technical College has donated several one-year scholarships which were part of the on demand writing competition last year."

Other state schools offering scholarships through the challenge are the University of Kentucky, Georgetown College, and Kentucky State, Eastern Kentucky, Morehead State and Murray State universities.

"We had two of our students receive college scholarships as a result of participating in the last district challenge," Finley said. "It was exciting to hear students talking about where they received their college scholarships and where they were already thinking about going to college while they were still in elementary school."

## MORE INFO...

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# KSB teacher finds right formula for teaching periodic table

By Matthew Tungate

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Science teacher Samir Azer didn't know anything about teaching visually-impaired students when he joined the faculty at the Kentucky School for the Blind in 1999.

The Egyptian-born Azer did know about science, however, having taught students and employees of an oil company in Saudi Arabia since 1983. He has taught high-level, pre-college chemistry, physics and mathematics. And he knew that the foundation of chemistry is the periodic table of chemical elements.

"You cannot teach chemistry without the periodic table," he said.

But visually-impaired students did not use the periodic table to learn the elements, Azer said, instead just learning from a list. So he created his own tactile version of the periodic table.

Using that early version as a model, the American Printing House for the Blind designed and produced Azer's Interactive Periodic Table Study Set and began marketing it worldwide this fall. The product has a model of the atom, which is felt, and the neutrons, electrons and protons have fabric fasteners on the back. The periodic table uses the same principle: the hexagonal-shaped elements have fabric fasteners on the back, which stick to a foldable board covered in felt. The elements are colored and have a bump or ridge based on their type of element. There also are pieces that represent electrical charge and number of electrons.

Karen Poppe, tactile graphics project leader for the American Printing House for the Blind, said the need for a periodic table was made obvious through listservs and teacher conferences.

"It's been a long time coming," she said. "It's probably something we should have done 10 years ago. It was just sort of a given that it's just not acceptable the way it is."

Azer, who receives no royalties from the product, said the periodic table has to be

taught the way it has been developed, in rows and columns, grouped based on chemical properties.

"If this idea was not offered to the blind kids, how can you expect them to study the elements?" he said. "I insisted that the students that are blind should have the periodic table the way it is developed. It can't be a list of all elements with the properties of the elements. That's not a periodic table. You are not classifying these elements."

He said that was one of the first challenges when he started teaching at the school. Azer had a student who needed to do hands-on learning in 2000-01. "So with this guy in my mind, I started thinking for a way to help him," he said.

Azer sought advice from many places, including the American Printing House for the Blind, on how to teach chemistry to the blind. American Printing House staff said they have looked for years for a good way to teach the periodic table.

"The periodic table helps students from the very beginning: understanding the structure of the atom and the subatomic particles and where they are; drawing the electron dot diagram; and practicing how to illustrate how electrons are lost or gained or shared between atoms to make the different chemical bonds; and then it helped them write a chemical formula and balance a chemical equation," Azer said.

Azer made the first version of his interactive periodic table with tools he bought and cut out models of the atom himself. The atomic model was cardboard with pins for the protons, neutrons and electrons, and he used magnetic pieces for the elements on metal backing to do the periodic table.

"I'm a handyman," he said. "I like to do things."

About six years ago, the American Printing House had a meeting with teachers from all over the country looking for ideas from all disciplines. Staff already knew he was working on the periodic table and invited



Photos by Amy Wallot

Samir Azer helps freshman Bobby Townsend use the periodic table during physical science class at the Kentucky School for the Blind in Louisville.

him to the meeting.

"They all recommended this as an idea the market needs," Azer said.

Poppe wanted something that was both tactile and visually attractive for students who have some sight, since only about 10 percent of KSB-registered students are blind.

"So when we develop a product, we have to keep in mind that it's very likely these products are going to be used by kids with low vision as well, so we try to marry both the tactile and low-vision aspects," she said.

American Printing House came up with an idea to put the elements and other components in a binder, he said.

"Actually there were many great ideas that the people at the American Printing House had," he said. "They are experts, of course. They understand what is more practical."

Poppe said Azer's assistance made the product better.

"It does help to have that outside source, that expert in the classroom, to assist with knowing what's actually needed in a product and how the students will receive it and what's useful," she said.

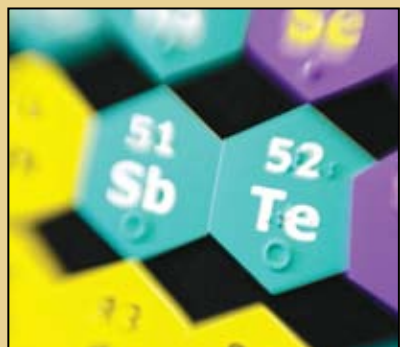
Azer said he is just happy to have his name attached to the product.

"I feel that my periodic table will prove that this place is a leader," he said. "It's not only teaching 100 students here, and that is very expensive. It is leading the whole state to new technology, and this is where teachers who are teaching the blind come here to get it from us."

## MORE INFO...

[www.aph.org/advisory/2008adv09.html#P2](http://www.aph.org/advisory/2008adv09.html#P2)

Samir Azer, samir.azer@ksb.kyschools.us, (502) 897-1583



Azer's Interactive Periodic Table Study Set is designed to make learning about the periodic table of the elements accessible to students with visual impairments or blindness. The tangible materials that are included assist in the instruction and demonstration of concepts related to the arrangement of the periodic table, atomic structure, ionic and covalent bonding, and balancing of chemical equations to students who benefit from a hands-on, interactive model.



# LEADERSHIP LETTER

Compiled by Susan Riddell, [susan.riddell@education.ky.gov](mailto:susan.riddell@education.ky.gov)

## 'Transition to Teaching' receives high rating

The Transition to Teaching (TTT) program, an initiative supported by the Kentucky Department of Education, school districts and state universities, has been rated an "effective" federal program by the Office of Management and Budget in Washington, D.C.

TTT is only the sixth federal education program and the first discretionary program that funds educational services to receive the rating, which is the highest a program can achieve.

The TTT program is designed to recruit and retain highly qualified individuals to meet the needs of high-need, high-poverty Kentucky school districts in specific subject areas. The program is targeted toward mid-career professionals or recent college graduates who have not completed a teacher-preparation program. Participants must indicate a desire to teach in a high-need subject: math, science, language arts, social studies/government, arts and humanities, special education, English as a Second Language or world languages. To date, 273 individuals have participated in the TTT program in Kentucky.

TTT participants receive a \$5,000 stipend over two years, one-on-one coaching, professional development and teacher certification upon the satisfactory completion of all requirements:

- completion of the online Transition to Teaching application
- acceptance into the alternative certification/MAT or MASE program with a partner university
- employment with a partner school
- a three-year commitment to teach in the school district
- completion of coursework
- completion of the Kentucky Internship Program (KTIP)
- successful completion of the specialty test (PRAXIS II)

Four Kentucky state universities – Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, Murray State University and Northern Kentucky University – and one private university – Campbellsville – participate in the program. Campbellsville University works directly with 35 school districts and focuses on teachers of students with learning behavior disorders (LBD). Other school districts (some of which also are involved in the Campbellsville project) participate in the program through the other four universities.

School districts participating in the transition to teaching program include: Adair County, Allen County, Ashland Independent, Berea Independent, Breathitt County,

Campbellsville Independent, Casey County, Caverna Independent, Covington Independent, Edmonson County, Frankfort Independent, Fulton County, Fulton Independent, Glasgow Independent, Green County, Hart County, Hickman County, Hopkins County, Jackson County, Jefferson County, Jenkins Independent, Knox County, Lee County, Letcher County, Lewis County, Lincoln County, Menifee County, Metcalfe County, Monticello Independent, Morgan County, Newport Independent, Owensboro Independent, Paintsville Independent, Paris Independent, Powell County, Pulaski County, Robertson County, Russell County, Russellville Independent, Somerset Independent and Williamsburg Independent.

In awarding the rating, the Office of Management and Budget considered three main criteria:

- **The program addresses a compelling need.** It targets high-poverty schools and districts that have difficulty recruiting highly qualified teachers, although some statutory and administrative obstacles prevent the program from supporting more innovative alternative certification programs.
- **The program has demonstrated improvements in performance achieving annual and long-term goals.** The program has three performance measures and two efficiency measures, and each cohort of grantees has shown, to a large extent, improvements each year in each measure.
- **Data are available to the public in a transparent and meaningful manner.** Aggregate and grantee-level performance and efficiency data are posted on the KDE Transition to Teaching program Web site. [www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10003318.2008.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10003318.2008.html)  
[www.ed.gov/programs/transitionteach/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/transitionteach/index.html)

## Spanish visiting teachers for the 2009-10 school year

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) can provide assistance for schools needing a Spanish or English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for the 2009-10 school year through its Visiting Teacher from Spain program.

Since 2000, KDE has worked with the Spanish Ministry of Education to help school districts fill vacant P-12 Spanish and ESL teacher positions. Through this program, school districts have the option to hire certified Spanish or ESL educators on Education Professional Standards Board-approved limited certificate contracts, renewable for up to three years and longer. These teachers are experienced, certified,

native-speaking language educators eager for a teaching experience in the United States, according to Jacque Van Houten, Kentucky Department of Education world language and international education consultant.

Local school districts hire the visiting teachers in accordance with all other local policies in terms of salary scale, certification and local system requirements. KDE handles initial interviewing in Madrid, Spain, secures J1 Visas and provides the teachers with one-week orientation/pre-K service training and follow-up visits. Schools must agree to mentor the teachers and help them adjust socially to their new environment.

School administrators interested in bringing a qualified Spanish or ESL teacher to a district through the Visiting Teachers Program should contact Van Houten at [jacqueline.vanhouten@education.ky.gov](mailto:jacqueline.vanhouten@education.ky.gov) or (502) 564-2106.

## Teacher absences hurt low income the most

Absences by public school teachers, which average about nine to 10 days a year, disproportionately affect students from low-income families, according to a report by the Center for American Progress.

"Students in schools serving predominantly low-income families experience

teacher absence at higher rates than students in more affluent communities," the report says. Because of this, "part of the achievement gap is due to a teacher attendance gap." That's a good reason for policy people to revisit the issue of teacher-absences, the think tank maintains. It also points to other reasons:

- Teacher absence is expensive. With 5.3 percent of teachers absent on a given day, stipends for substitute teachers and associated administrative costs amount to \$4 billion.
- Teacher absence negatively affects student achievement. Researchers have found that every 20 absences lower mathematics achievement by the same amount as having a teacher with one to two years of experience instead of a teacher with three to five years of experience.

The report recommends that the federal government require school districts to provide data on teacher absences under the No Child Left Behind act, that state legislators re-examine teachers' leave privileges and that local policymakers experiment with incentives to reduce teacher absences.

Read more at [www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/10/teacher\\_absence.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/10/teacher_absence.html) or go to [www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/10/pdf/teacher\\_absence.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/10/pdf/teacher_absence.pdf) to see the report.



Photo by Tim Thornberry

## Everybody Reads

Kentucky Board of Education members posed for a picture as part of the READ poster project. The project was modeled after the national READ campaign and is the first of its kind in Kentucky. The goals of the project are to feature role models sharing their love of reading by holding a favorite book, to promote literacy and to remind people that reading is fun. Front row from left: Jeanne Ferguson, Brigitte Ramsey, Judy Gibbons, Dorie Combs and Kaye Baird. Second row from left: C.B. Akins, Steve Neal, Joe Brothers, Billy Harper and Doug Hubbard.



# BULLETIN BOARD

Compiled by Susan Riddell, [susan.riddell@education.ky.gov](mailto:susan.riddell@education.ky.gov)

## Conferences & Workshops

### Fossil Finders program

Cornell University is piloting an inquiry-based science partnership and curriculum funded by the National Science Foundation called Fossil Finders. In two years, the curriculum will be available online nationwide. This summer, Cornell will be running a professional development workshop for grades 5-9 teachers in Ithaca, N.Y., from Aug. 9-14. Teachers who are admitted into the program will earn a sizeable honorarium, a digital camera, the use of a laptop for two years and the opportunity to pilot an innovative science curriculum in their classrooms. Applications are due by March 2, 2009, and may be sent to Daniel Capps at [dkc39@cornell.edu](mailto:dkc39@cornell.edu) or Barbara Crawford at [bac45@cornell.edu](mailto:bac45@cornell.edu).

[www.fossilfinders.org](http://www.fossilfinders.org)

### ACEI annual conference

The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) invites classroom teachers, administrators, principals, school board members, teacher educators, college students, child care personnel, parents and other caregivers to attend its Annual International Conference and Exhibition, "Children at the Crossroads: Educating All to Move Forward," March 18-21, 2009, in Chicago. Conference highlights include more than 225 workshops, research presentations and panel discussions led by renowned experts in the fields of early and middle childhood education. For more information, call (800) 423-3563 or e-mail [conference@acei.org](mailto:conference@acei.org).

[www.acei.org/annualconfex.htm](http://www.acei.org/annualconfex.htm)

### Project Citizen training

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) will be hosting a Project Citizen training in Frankfort on Jan. 10, 2009. The training is designed for elementary and middle school teachers. The AOC will pay for mileage, food, classroom materials and hotel if traveling more than 60 miles. For more information, contact Earl J. Kuhnell at [EarlKuhnell@KYCourts.net](mailto:EarlKuhnell@KYCourts.net) or (502) 573-2350, ext. 4240, or Mendy Meehan at [mendy.meehan@education.ky.gov](mailto:mendy.meehan@education.ky.gov) or (502) 564-2106, ext. 4146.

### Reading Recovery & K-6 Classroom Literacy

The National Reading Recovery & K-6 Classroom Literacy Conference is set for Feb. 7-10, 2009. This professional learning community offers 150 sessions focusing on all aspects of K-6 literacy for reading specialists, teachers, literacy coaches, reading and curriculum specialists, school administra-

tors, librarians and pre-service teachers at the Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio. For more information, call (614) 310-7323.

<http://readingrecovery.org/conferences/national/index.asp>

### Kentucky Reading Project

Applications for the Kentucky Reading Project (KRP), a professional development opportunity in reading instruction for K-5 teachers, will be available from school principals and professional development coordinators after Jan. 1, 2009. They are also available at [www.kentuckyliteracy.org](http://www.kentuckyliteracy.org). KRP is designed to improve student achievement and emphasize family involvement in literacy. This year-long, graduate-level reading course consists of a two-week summer institute, four follow-up sessions during the year and a coaching visit to each teacher. The two-week summer institutes take place in June and July 2009 at each of the eight state universities. There will also be a KRP offered in southeastern Kentucky at a location to be determined. Applications must be received by Feb. 20, 2009. For more information, contact Cary Pappas at [cary.pappas@uky.edu](mailto:cary.pappas@uky.edu).

### The future of diversity

"Diversity 2.0: Tomorrow's Solutions for Today's Problems," a conference hosted by the University of Kentucky's Cooperative Extension Service, and Purdue, Ohio State and Kentucky State universities, is set for Feb. 5-6 in Cincinnati. Registration is due by Jan. 14, 2009, for the early bird discount. For more information, contact Steve Brady at [brady.111@osu.edu](mailto:brady.111@osu.edu) or (513) 695-1311.

[www.ces.purdue.edu/dearborn/diversityconf.htm](http://www.ces.purdue.edu/dearborn/diversityconf.htm)

### Mathematics education at Eastern Kentucky

Eastern Kentucky University will begin two cohorts in Mathematics Education in the spring. For more information, contact ECU Assistant Professor Robert Thomas at [robert.thomas@eku.edu](mailto:robert.thomas@eku.edu).

<http://math.eku.edu/thomas/secondaryinfo.htm>

<http://math.eku.edu/thomas/middleinfo.htm>

### NCTM's Winter e-Workshop series

These interactive 90-minute professional development e-Workshops for Pre-K-5 teachers provide activities and tips for engaging students, as well as a follow-up session to discuss the impact of the activities on student learning. The two-part e-Workshops include

three hours of standards-based content that can be immediately applied in a classroom.

[www.nctm.org/eworkshops](http://www.nctm.org/eworkshops)

### 2009 Gilder Lehrman Summer Seminar applications

The Gilder Lehrman Institute has announced its 2009 Summer Seminar schedule. There are 40 seminars available this year. Some of the many sessions available include:

- David Armitage, The International Impact of the Declaration of Independence
- Anthony Badger, The Civil Rights Movement
- Nancy Cott, Twentieth Century Women's Rights Movements
- John Demos, Everyday Life in Early America
- Michael Kazin and Michael Flamm, The Sixties in Historical Perspective
- Larry Kramer, The Role of the Supreme Court in U.S. History
- Steven Mintz, Teaching Digital History
- The Oxford Global Lincoln Conference

[www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/seminars1.html](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/seminars1.html)

## Contests & Other Events

### Governor's School for the Arts

The Governor's School for the Arts is accepting applications for the 2009 summer program, which will run from June 21 through July 11. The application deadline is Dec. 31. Students can complete a paper application and submit by mail, or apply online. Any sophomore or junior can apply—no GPA requirements or nomination from the school required. Auditions will be conducted in late February and March at various locations across the state.

[www.kentuckygsa.org](http://www.kentuckygsa.org)

### Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program

K-12 teachers can apply for an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship and prepare to spend a school year in Washington, D.C., sharing expertise with policy makers. The goal of the Einstein Fellows program is to provide an opportunity for teachers to inform national policy and improve communication between the K-12 STEM education community and national leaders. The application deadline is Jan. 13, 2009. For more information about the Einstein Fel-

(Continued on page 15)



Photo by Amy Wallot



## BULLETIN BOARD *(continued)*

lows program, contact Liz Burck at burckl@triangle-coalition.org.

[www.trianglecoalition.org/ein.htm](http://www.trianglecoalition.org/ein.htm)  
<https://applicationlink.labworks.org/applicationlink/default.htm>

### National Engineers competition

The National Engineers Week Future City competition aims to stir interest in science, technology, mathematics and engineering among young people. Students work in teams under the guidance of a teacher and a volunteer engineer mentor to design and build a city of tomorrow. They also must conduct research for an essay on a pressing social need. This year, the essay centers on ways to improve water use by creating a home system that minimizes the use of municipal or externally supplied water for its daily requirements. The statewide competition will be held at the University of Kentucky on Jan. 24, 2009.

[www.futurecity.org](http://www.futurecity.org)

### NASA videoconferencing

NASA's Digital Learning Network presents a series of videoconferences to assist educators in staying current on NASA education resources and related products. During the videoconferences, participants will be able to submit questions to the presenter that will be addressed during the presentation.

The following topics will be covered from 4-5 p.m. each date:

- STS-119, Jan. 28, 2009
- Chemistry: What Is Your Cosmic Connection to the Elements?, Feb. 25
- Kepler Mission, March 25
- Meteorology: An Educators Resource Guide for Inquiry-Based Learning, April 29
- NASA Explores Virtual Worlds, May 27

For more information, contact Caryn Long at [caryn.long@nasa.gov](mailto:caryn.long@nasa.gov).

<http://dln.nasa.gov/dln/content/webcast>  
[www.nasa.gov/education](http://www.nasa.gov/education)

### Kentucky Brain Bee for high school students

The second annual Kentucky Brain Bee will be Feb. 7, 2009, in Morehead. Application deadline is Jan. 30. Any interested high school student can compete in the Brain Bee. For more information, contact MSU Psychology Professor Ilsun White at [i.white@morehead-st.edu](mailto:i.white@morehead-st.edu)

### Columbus Awards

In its 13th year, the Christopher Columbus Awards, a free program that challenges middle school students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities, announces the program's Call for Entries for this school year. Teams of up to four students

and a coach identify a community issue and use the scientific process to solve it. Finalists win an all-expense paid trip to Walt Disney World where they will compete for gold medals and U.S. Savings Bonds. Coaches may be teachers, parents, community leaders or mentors. The deadline for receipt of entries is Feb. 9, 2009. For more information, contact Stephanie Hallman at [shallman@mmseducation.com](mailto:shallman@mmseducation.com) or (800) 291-6020, ext. 3154.

[www.christophercolumbusawards.com](http://www.christophercolumbusawards.com)

### KGA grants

The Kentucky Geographic Alliance is providing \$500 grants to eight teachers. Teachers who have been through professional development training related to environmental education or geography may apply for this grant. The grant recipient is expected to present his or her grant work at the Kentucky Council for the Social Studies conference in 2009. Deadline to apply is Feb. 20. For more information, contact Kay Gandy at [kga@wku.edu](mailto:kga@wku.edu).

### National Academy of Engineering

The National Academy of Engineering is sponsoring an engineering essay contest on the EngineerGirl Web site for students. This year's theme, "Imagine That! Engineering Innovation," has been posted for students in grades 3-12 who can compete for cash prizes. The deadline is March 1, 2009.

[www.engineergirl.org/CMS/Contest.aspx](http://www.engineergirl.org/CMS/Contest.aspx)

### Davidson Institute seeks achievers

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development is seeking 2009 Davidson Fellows, an honor accompanied by a \$50,000, \$25,000 or \$10,000 scholarship in recognition of a significant piece of work in science, technology, mathematics, music, literature, philosophy or "Outside the Box." Applicants can't turn 18 before Oct. 1, 2009. Application deadline is March 4, 2009. Applicants must submit an original piece of work recognized by experts in the field as significant and it must have the potential to make a positive contribution to society.

[www.davidsonfellows.org](http://www.davidsonfellows.org)

### Siemens Web challenge

Through March 15, 2009, middle school students can go green and team up for the Siemens "We Can Change the World Challenge," the first and only national K-12 sustainability education initiative aligned to education standards. The challenge is entirely Web-based and provides a robust collection of resources for students and teachers from interactive labs to lesson plans.

<http://siemens.discoveryeducation.com>

### DNA Day Essay

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) is sponsoring the fourth annual DNA Day Essay Contest for students in grades 9-12. Winning students will receive cash prizes and teachers of first-place winners will receive a \$2,000 grant for laboratory genetics equipment. The deadline to enter is March 16, 2009. For more information, contact Angie Wong at (301) 634-7326.

[www.ashg.org/education](http://www.ashg.org/education)

### National Underground Railroad essay contest

This contest invites students to write an essay of not more than 2,000 words (supplemented with a bibliography) conveying what lessons they believe emerge from the history of the Underground Railroad and the movement that resulted in the abolishment of slavery in the United States that can help guide the abolition of contemporary forms of slavery that exist in today's world. Entries may be submitted as either Microsoft Word or PDF documents or both. All entries must be received by March 15, 2009, and can be e-mailed to Bob Nasson at [rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org](mailto:rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org). Applicants should type "NURFC" in the subject line.

### ASHRAE Donald T. MacClellan Scholarship

The American Society of Heating Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Donald T. MacClellan Scholarship, in the amount of \$500, is awarded annually and is available to individuals entering or currently enrolled in an undergraduate program in engineering, science or engi-

neering technology in which the student is pursuing a course of study that traditionally has been a preparatory curriculum for a career in HVAC&R. More information and an online application are available at the ASHRAE chapter Website at <http://bluegrass.ashraeregion7.org>, or e-mail questions to [student\\_activities@bluegrass.ashraeregion7.org](mailto:student_activities@bluegrass.ashraeregion7.org). Application deadline is March 15.

## Resources

### Kentucky Geological Survey publications

Two maps from the Kentucky Geological Survey have recently been published. These maps can serve as an educational resource and possibly for planning purposes (particularly the hazards map). For Geologic Hazards in Kentucky map, go to [www.uky.edu/KGS/announce/map\\_hazard.htm](http://www.uky.edu/KGS/announce/map_hazard.htm). For Kentucky Terrain, go to [www.uky.edu/KGS/announce/map\\_terrain.htm](http://www.uky.edu/KGS/announce/map_terrain.htm).

### Free Lincoln Bicentennial classroom poster

Celebrate the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth in February 2009 with the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission's free classroom poster. The front side, suitable for classroom display, is a portrait of Lincoln, while the reverse contains resources for educators, offering suggestions for incorporating Lincoln's legacy into the classroom. To request this poster, call (202) 707-6998 or visit [www.abrahamlincoln200.org](http://www.abrahamlincoln200.org) and click on "For Teachers."



Photo by Amy Wallot

### Mobile stargazing

Hummel Planetarium Manager Cory Anderson teaches Georgia Wilder's 3rd-grade class about the phases of the moon at Camp Ground Elementary (Laurel County). Wilder's class and the 4th-grade classes participated in the astronomy lesson that included entering the 16-foot inflatable STARLAB planetarium, which is an outreach program of the Hummel Planetarium at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond. For more information, visit [www.planetarium.eku.edu/starlab\\_outreach.php](http://www.planetarium.eku.edu/starlab_outreach.php).



# Highland hits the right notes as an NCLB Blue Ribbon School

This is the first profile in a series about the four Kentucky Blue Ribbon Schools. The February issue of *Kentucky Teacher* will feature May Valley Elementary (Floyd County), followed by profiles in later issues on Veterans Park Elementary (Fayette County) and White Hall Elementary (Madison County).

**By Susan Riddell**

susan.riddell@education.ky.gov

Hearing that Highland Elementary School (Daviess County) was named a 2008 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Blue Ribbon School was music to the ears of Principal Anita Newman.

Or was that just the xylophones and glockenspiels being played down the hallway in her school?

Newman will tell you it's both. In fact, she attributes a lot of the school's academic success to her students' interest in the arts.

"We have a wonderful music program," Newman said. "Research tells us children who have a strong music background usually have a very strong academic background. At Highland, we focus on the whole child not just part of the child, and our music program has taken our students very far."

Highland, a public elementary school of 670-plus students, was recently named a Blue Ribbon school along with three other state public elementary schools. The award recognizes schools that help students achieve at high levels and that make significant progress in closing achievement gaps. The program rewards schools that score in the top 10 percent statewide in reading and mathematics on state assessments. Blue Ribbon Schools also must make Adequate Yearly Progress under the requirements of the federal NCLB Act.

Pam Howell is the music teacher at Highland Elementary. She feels that despite not having a full-time visual arts person on staff, her work, as well as work from classroom teachers and the district's Discovery Team, provides a unique arts experience to all students.

"Our school is very supportive of arts education," Howell said. "Our music program is very well supported, too. All 12 elementary schools in the Daviess County district have the Yamaha Music in Education Keyboard Lab. Highland also has an Orff percussion instrumentarium (complete with several xylophones and glockenspiels), 26 dulcimers, three-octave tone chimes, 30 student harps and 30 student guitars."

These instruments are used in class, as well as in extra-curricular choir and percussion ensembles.

All of these groups and instruments are featured in the school's annual Renaissance



Photos by Amy Wallot

*Teacher Jane Lindow helps kindergarten student Skylar Cain with adjectives during class at Highland Elementary (Daviess County), a 2008 Blue Ribbon School.*

Fair presented by 4th- and 5th-grade students each Christmas.

"The school is transformed into a castle and Renaissance village with art work produced by our 2nd and 3rd graders," Howell said. "The student performance is a madrigal dessert dinner with wassail (a hot, spiced punch served during the holiday season). This has become Highland's signature performance as we are going into our 13th season this year."

"It's a magical place to be," added Newman of the Renaissance Fair. "The fair brings everybody together collaboratively — parents, students, faculty. They all play a big part in it. It's about learning, but the children get more than that out of it."

Like the Renaissance Fair, Newman says music and the arts curriculum support a positive attitude in the students that influence learning in the traditional classroom setting.

"Children come in here and gain a wealth of confidence doing something fun and different," Newman said. "If they do well in here doing something different, it gives kids confidence in the classroom learning new and different things."

Howell adds that music fosters another element to reading in the classroom. "Our goal in music class is getting children to read music while also gaining the skills to play," she said. "We teach reading music, teachers teach reading words and sentences. A lot of the methods are the same. Music is such an

abstract subject. We work with fine motor skills, too, so that's another benefit. It all goes together; coordination, understanding, skill level."

## Open response coaching

Commonwealth Accountability Testing System indices at Highland have been consistently above goal. Highland reached proficiency in 2002 with an academic index of 103.6 and has maintained steady growth ever since.

A big step in getting over the proficiency hump, according to Newman, was the implementation of an open response coach.

Nina Coffey, who taught at Highland for 30 years prior to retirement, returned to the school nine years ago to serve as the school's open response coach. She works with grades 3-5, visiting each grade one day a week. Coffey is in the classroom working with the teacher and students in an effort to offer immediate support and feedback.

Serving as an open response coach, "is like sports," Coffey said. "What do you have to do to be good? You have to have a coach to succeed. You have to have practices. That's what I equate it to. The coaching is just like playing in a game. The coach helps you get ready. We practice open response questions each week, and when we get to that big game at the end of the year, we know how to play."

"The most important part is the teachers," Coffey added. "They are the ones teaching the skills all week. I just come in one day



*Fourth-grade student Jay Lohmann plays a glockenspiel during Pam Howell's class at Highland Elementary (Daviess County).*

a week and help them practice on how to answer the questions."

Newman adds that the coach brings consistency into the classroom.

"All teachers teach differently," Newman said. "The coach brings in the consistency for the children. We have outstanding teachers, but we don't want even one child confused, so the coach comes in and can serve as a follow-up or a reinforcer to the lessons taught."

"It speeds up the feedback part of the learning process, too," Newman added. The children need that immediate response. When students take a spelling test on Friday, they can't get feedback until Monday because the teacher won't have time to grade tests because she's still teaching that day. The content still has to be taught. With open response, the first thing children want to know is how they did. It has to be quick, because that's the best time to correct what needs to be corrected. That's when it matters the most. The teacher formulates the open response questions a week in advance and gives them to coach Coffey. She knows how the teacher wants the answer to appear. So coach Coffey in no way takes over instruction. She facilitates what the teacher wants to get across."

Newman said the open response coaching brought the school immediate success. "We saw benefits right away. Our score increased 13 points after the first year alone," she said.

## MORE INFO...

[www2.daviess.kyschools.us/hes](http://www2.daviess.kyschools.us/hes)  
anita.newman@daviess.kyschools.us